



U.S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20416

OCT 11 2005

The Honorable John F. Kerry
Ranking Member
Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Kerry:

Administrator Barreto has asked me to respond to your letter of September 23, 2005, regarding implementation of the Women-Owned Small Business (WOSB) Federal Contract Assistance Program.

We wish to note first that we share your concern that women-owned small businesses, as described in SBA's FY2004 Small Business Goaling Report, failed to achieve the five percent contracting goal for women-owned small business. Regrettably, this has been a long standing problem spanning many years and a number of Administrations.

We do wish to point out, however, that women-owned small businesses are the fastest growing sector of the economy. SBA has contributed to this by making available a number of initiatives and programs to help women-owned small businesses. For example, SBA's Office of Federal Contract Assistance for Women Business Owners (CAWBO) is working closely with the Women Advocates in each agency and the Directors of the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization to promote opportunities for WOSBs. Moreover, SBA's 8(a) program affords eligible women-owned small business owners benefits comparable to those available under the WOSB contracting program, which is the focus of your September 23, 2005 letter. Both minority and non-minority women-owned businesses are currently availing themselves of its set aside contracting benefits. In addition, the list of Women Advocates can be found at <http://www.sba.gov/GC/indexprograms-cawbo.html#advocates>.

SBA also is working diligently to enhance the efforts of Federal agencies to achieve the goal of awarding five percent of all prime and subcontracts to WOSBs. In addition, CAWBO collaborated with SBA's National Women Business Council to develop a website for women business owners, <http://www.womenbiz.gov/>, which contains in-depth information for women-owned small businesses that are interested in doing business with the Federal Government. It contains over 100 links to current procurement information. Another powerful portal is <http://www.women-21.gov/>, which is a one-stop shop for women's entrepreneurship in the 21st century.

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As to your concern about the Request for Proposals (RFP) for the disparity study of women-owned small businesses, the Agency did solicit proposals for the Study in August. Unfortunately, there were no technically qualified bids, so a decision was made to solicit proposals in a "full and open competition." We expect to go out with this in early October.

As we noted in our previous letter, regulations have been drafted and are circulating internally. After the internal draft has been cleared by all of the relevant SBA offices and approved by the Administrator, the Agency will submit the draft proposed rule to OMB for its review as part of the normal regulatory process. You should be aware that in order to expedite the implementation of the program, a decision was made earlier to begin the regulatory process at the same time the study was being procured and undertaken.

We hope this addresses your concerns. Should you have additional questions, please contact Janis Coughlin-Piester of our Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs at (202) 205-6700.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Calvin Jenkins".

Calvin Jenkins
Deputy Associate Deputy Administrator for
Government Contracting and Business
Development